

Las Perry Apple Mill and Press, circa 1880
East side of State Route 1758
Pearces Vicinity
Franklin County
North Carolina

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

Las Perry Apple Mill and Press

NC-13

Location:	East side of SR 1758, 0.1 miles north of SR 1721. Pearces vicinity, Franklin County, North Carolina. UTM: Quad:
Date of Construction:	c. 1880
Original Owner:	Las Perry
Present Owner:	Hazel Perry
Significance:	Rare, essentially intact example of 19th century rural, horse-powered industry
Current Condition:	Mill - excellent; press - fair
Historian:	Patrick W. O'Bannon, 1977.

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The Las Perry Apple Mill and Press is a rare, essentially intact example of 19th century North Carolina rural industry. Small family industries were, at one time, of vital importance to the agricultural economy. Reportedly almost a century old, the mill and adjoining press are representative of the horse-powered industries that once existed in Piedmont North Carolina.

Constructed of wood, the mill consists of a trough; a central vertical pole; an iron shaft or axle; a millstone; and a yoke. Approximately 18' in diameter, wooden members divide the mill base into diagonally braced quadrants. A circular trough 15" high and 14" wide rests on the bracing. An iron shaft attached to the central column served as the millstone axle. The shaft, passing through the center of the stone, terminated in a yoke. The 4' diameter millstone was 4" thick. A horse or mule hitched to the yoke walked around the trough, thus propelling the millstone. The revolving stone crushed the apples that had been placed in the trough.

A two-story elevated frame structure shelters the mill. Built on four 6' stone piers, the building served as a storage shed for cotton and tobacco. The building apparently had little to do with the apple operations. [1]

Outside, but adjoining the mill, are the remains of the apple press. Essentially a simple lever, the press squeezed the juice or cider from the apple pulp. The press consisted of a 12" square vertical post; a 12" square horizontal beam; a 6' square wooden bed on which stood a 5 1/2' diameter oaken tub; and various wooden posts used in jacking the free end of the beam.

After the mill crushed the apples, workmen shoveled the pulp into burlap bags and placed them in the tub on the press bed. A wooden plate covered the bagged pulp. Through a series of wooden posts, levers, and iron pegs, the beam was jacked down onto the plate which covered the apples. The juice flowed from an opening and was collected in bottles. Depending upon the length of time involved either fermented cider, unfermented cider, or brandy was made from the juice.

Las Perry built the mill to crush the apple harvest from both his and neighbors' orchards. Apparently he allowed other farmers to use and operate the mill and probably charged some sort of fee. [2] Four men worked the mill and press: two at the press, one at the mill, and one with the mule. The daily capacity was about 8-10 barrels. [3] It is not known how long the mill and press were in use, but Hazel Perry, the present owner, recalls neighbors

crushing apples as recently as 1952. [4]

Apples were never a large component of North Carolina's agricultural economy. The Las Perry Apple Mill and Press represents a type of structure not very common in 19th century North Carolina. The technology involved was not complicated, and the mill and press are excellent examples of rural horse-powered industry.

NOTES

¹Interview with Hazel Perry, Pearces, North Carolina,
23 August 1977.

²Ibid. Mrs. Perry does not remember for certain if her
father-in-law charged for the use of the mill, but assumes that
he did.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Perry, Hazel, Pearces, North Carolina, 23 August 1977.

Although Mrs. Perry is 87 years old, her memory is relatively good and her accounts are probably fairly accurate. Members of her immediate family are usually present around the site and can help to explain Mrs. Perry's recollections.

Perry, Lawrence. Drawing done for North Carolina's Historic Sites Survey Report Form. (Handwritten, 1975.)